

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2012*

**Remarks Prior to a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters**

*November 28, 2012*

*The President.* Hello, everybody. Is that brighter than usual? [*Laughter*] Yes, that's serious.

Well, listen, this is a wonderful opportunity for me to meet with my full Cabinet for the first time since the election took place. The primary purpose from my perspective is to say thank you, because everybody here, in their respective agencies, has done a remarkable job on behalf of the American people, across the board on a wide range of issues. They've always prioritized how do we make sure that we have a strong middle class, how do we grow our economy, how do we put people back to work, and how do we keep the American people safe and continue to extend our influence and our ideals around the world. And I could not have a better collection of people, many of whom have stayed here throughout my first term. And I think we've had as little turnover as any President during the course of a first term, and the reason is because everybody has done such a remarkable job.

So my main purpose is to say thank you to them, but also to remind them, we've got a lot of work to do. There are going to be a few specific issues that we spend a lot of time on. One in particular that I should note is that the devastating impact of Hurricane Sandy is still being felt by families all across New York and New Jersey, parts of Connecticut. We are very pleased that under the leadership initially of Janet Napolitano and FEMA, but now Shaun Donovan, who's heading up a task force, we're focusing not only on recovery, but now on rebuilding and making sure those communities come back stronger than ever and people get the help that they need. So that will be an important topic because it's really going to be an interagency concern.

The second thing that we'll be talking about, obviously, is what's on the minds of a lot of American families across the country, and that is making sure that we get this fiscal cliff dealt with and that middle class taxes don't go up. I already spoke extensively about that today. I'll just repeat: There is no reason why taxes on middle class families should go up. It would be bad for the economy. It would be bad for those families. In fact, it would be bad for the world economy. And so I think it's very important that we get that resolved, and I am very open to a fair and balanced approach to reduce our deficit and provide the kind of certainty that businesses and consumers need so that we can keep this recovery going.

And obviously, we'll be spending some time talking about national security issues as well.

But I just want to say thank you to this extraordinary Cabinet for a job well done. And I will take this opportunity to publicly embarrass two members of the Cabinet whose birthdays are either today or tomorrow: Ric Shinseki of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Happy birthday to you. And that is actually today. And Janet Napolitano's birthday is tomorrow.

All right, guys. Thank you. We want to get back to work.

*U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Susan E. Rice*

*Q.* Mr. President, do you think the Hill is being fair to Susan Rice in its meetings?

*The President.* Thank you so much, guys.

Q. Any thoughts on that at all?

*The President.* Susan Rice is extraordinary. I couldn't be prouder of the job that she's done as the USPR.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:11 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Cabinet, meeting with President; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Donovan, Shaun L.S.; Napolitano, Janet A.; Rice, Susan E.; Shinseki, Eric K.

*Subjects:* Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Cabinet, meeting with President; Connecticut : Hurricane Sandy, damage and recovery efforts; Homeland Security, Department of : Emergency Management Agency, Federal; Homeland Security, Department of : Secretary; Housing and Urban Development, Department of : Secretary; Natural disasters : Hurricane Sandy; New Jersey : Hurricane Sandy, damage and recovery efforts; New York : Hurricane Sandy, damage and recovery efforts; Taxation : Tax relief; United Nations : U.S. Permanent Representative; Veterans Affairs, Department of : Secretary.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD201200913.